

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Preparations for 6th Annual Commercial Fishers Appreciation Dinner



During the month of March, Fish and Wildlife Biologist Adam Kowalski has been busy setting up the 2003 commercial fisher appreciation dinner. Commercial trap-net fishers collect biological data from incidentally caught lake sturgeon during the fishing season for yellow perch and

lake whitefish on Lake Huron. This data is used to monitor the status of lake sturgeon in Lake Huron. This year the dinner will be a pig roast at a city park in Bay City, MI. The Alpena FRO will present each fisher and their crew t-shirts with the fisher's company name and a plaque or gift certificate. Biologist Kowalski has ordered the t-shirts, purchased all the gifts, constructed plaques, and worked with the caterer to arrange the meal. This dinner gives the Alpena FRO personnel a chance to talk with the fishers about any problems or concerns they may have about the sturgeon project. The fishers also get a chance to talk with each other and the Alpena FRO personnel about project results and fishing in general. During the dinner, prizes such as framed prints, knife sharpeners, t-shirts, fish cleaning gear, and boating accessories are given away. The dinner is a great way for the Alpena FRO to thank the commercial fishers for the volunteer hours they contribute to the sturgeon project.

Adam Kowalski

Lake Sturgeon Survey Planned for the Rifle River

On March 14, 2003 Fish and Wildlife Biologist Adam Kowalski talked with Jim Baker, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Southern Lake Huron Management Unit Supervisor, and other personnel from the Michigan DNR about starting a lake sturgeon assessment project at the mouth of the Rifle River. The Rifle River mouth is located in lower Michigan about 2 hours south of the Alpena FRO near the town of Omer. In the fall of 2002 FWS personnel surveying the Rifle River for sea lamprey saw a juvenile lake sturgeon in the river. Biologist Kowalski proposed setting large mesh gill nets off the mouth of the Rifle River to document the presence of spawning adult lake sturgeon this spring. Jim Baker agreed to the project and offered to report daily water temperatures of the river to alert the Alpena FRO of the proper temperature to start sampling. Once river temperatures reach 9°C, lake sturgeon may begin staging at the river mouth prior to spawning. Sampling will consist of 100 ft long eight and ten-inch stretch mesh gill nets set over night. These sizes were chosen to focus on adult sturgeon and reduce by-catch of other fish species. All sturgeon captured will be tagged with an external, serially

numbered floy tag and internal PIT tag. A fin ray sample will be taken for genetic analysis and to age the fish.

Adam Kowalski

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Thunder Bay Power Working Committee Meeting



Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill participated in the quarterly Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Working Committee for Thunder Bay Power (Working Committee). The Working Committee was created to assist Thunder Bay Power with its requirements to FERC under the terms of their license. Dr. Hill is the Service representative on the Working Committee. During the meeting schedules and planning of the upcoming 2003 field

season were discussed. Members of the Thunder Bay Audubon Society voiced their concerns over the potential treatment for aquatic nuisance plants on some of Thunder Bay Power's property. The Working Committee is seeking assistance from the FWS to develop grants for funding future projects. The meeting was attended by member representatives from Michigan DNR, Thunder Bay Power and FWS. In addition representatives from Thunder Bay Audubon Society, Thunder Bay River Restoration Committee, Hubbard Lake Sportsmen, Northeast Michigan Counsel of Governments, also participated.

Tracy D. Hill

Cooperation with Native Americans

Technical Fisheries Committee Approves Coho Stocking Proposal

On March 4 the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) convened a conference call to discuss a coho salmon stocking project proposed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for Lake Superior. Consistent with terms of the 2000 Consent Decree, parties proposing new fish stocking initiatives or making significant changes to existing stocking programs in 1836 Treaty waters are required to provide the proposal for review and approval by the TFC. The proposal calls for the reestablishment of coho salmon stocking in the Munising Bay area of Lake Superior to provide additional recreational fishing opportunities in the bay. A four-year stocking program will be evaluated relative to its effectiveness in restoring a self-sustaining fishery in Munising Bay. Although some concerns were raised relative to possible impacts to tribal commercial fishing and coaster brook trout restoration efforts, the parties reached consensus that allows the MDNR to move forward with the program. The conference call was coordinated by Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain, who serves as chair of the TFC. Participants in the call included representatives from MDNR, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Little Travers Bay Band of Onawa Indians and the Service.

Jerry R. McClain

Service Biologist Co-Chairs Modeling Subcommittee Meeting for 1836 Treaty Waters

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO attended and co-chaired the March 10-12th meeting of the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The primary focus of this meeting was to generate preliminary 2003 harvest limits for lake trout in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan, although other technical matters were discussed. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake trout harvest numbers must be calculated by the MSC, reviewed by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by March 31 each year. The 2000 Consent Decree is a 20 year fishery allocation agreement for 1836 Treaty waters signed by the State of Michigan, United States, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. The MSC will complete final lake trout harvest numbers and present them to the parties by April 30th as stipulated in the Decree. Biologist Woldt, along with Ji He of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, presented an update of the status of northern Lake Huron (MH-1 and MH-2) lake trout stock assessment models, model diagnostic output, and preliminary 2003 lake trout harvest limits. 2003 Lake Huron preliminary lake trout harvest limits increased substantially from 2002 levels due to declining sea lamprey mortality rates and increases in stock biomass due to decreasing mortality and increased stocking levels. These preliminary limits were presented to the TFC for review on March 26th. In addition to performing model analyses, biologist Woldt also ran the MSC meeting ensuring all agenda items were discussed and kept meeting minutes. A preliminary draft of the March 10-12th MSC meeting minutes was mailed to MSC members for review.

Aaron P. Woldt

Partnerships and Accountability

US and Canadian Partners Work to Create Lake Sturgeon Spawning Habitat

Fishery Biologist James Boase initiated a conference call between biologists from Alpena FRO, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) on March 20, 2003. The purpose of the conference call was to bring interested parties together to discuss the possibility of constructing an artificial lake sturgeon spawning reef in the St. Clair River. The proposed site is located in Canadian waters and is part of a remediation project at the Sarnia Dow Chemical Facility. This effort, if successful, would be a major advancement for the rehabilitation of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes that involves partners from US, Canada, and private industries. Because of the conference call, recommendations from biologists at Alpena FRO are now being considered for future remediation projects on the St. Clair River by OMNR and DFO.

James Boase

Partners for Fish and Wildlife State of Michigan Coordinators Meeting

Michigan Coordinators of the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife (Partners) Program held their annual meeting March 25-27 at the East Lansing Private Lands Office in East Lansing, Michigan. The Partners Program paperwork has all been revised, and many forms have been added to each Partners project to standardize the types of data collected

for each project, and to make sure each coordinator is following proper procedure. Project Leaders attended the meeting the morning of March 27, and were able to discuss issues and/or concerns they had regarding the Partners Program. Fish and Wildlife Biologist Heather Enterline, Partners coordinator for northern Michigan, and Alpena FRO Project Leader Jerry McClain attended the respective meetings.

Heather Enterline

Great Lakes Fishery Commission Meetings Held in March

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Milwaukee, Wisconsin on March 17 – 19, 2003 to attend the Upper Lakes Committee Meeting and traveled to Port Huron, Michigan on March 24 – 25 to attend the Lake Erie Committee Meeting. The annual meetings are sponsored by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Professionals from the Upper Great Lakes presented a wide range of information including; sea lamprey control, lake trout movement and rehabilitation, natural chinook salmon reproduction, and Lake Huron GIS. The agenda for the Lake Erie meeting included; changes in yellow perch and walleye harvest for 2003, fish health, benthic habitat surveys, and the construction of an artificial lake sturgeon spawning reef. The forum was an excellent opportunity for Boase to interact with fishery biologists from across the Great Lakes and to learn about research taking place in the Great Lakes. Boase also used the opportunity to distribute the report titled “2001 Activities of the Central Great Lakes Binational Lake Sturgeon Group” and to discuss lake sturgeon research that will be occurring in 2003.

James Boase

Public Use

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Centennial Celebration



The Ottawa NWR held their centennial cake cutting event on Friday March 14th. This was a day long event in which Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur and other congressional representatives were key note speakers. They spoke of their support for the USFWS, the refuge system, and the new visitors' education center for Ottawa NWR. Recently congress appropriated funds for an Ottawa NWR visitors' center. This new center was celebrated during this event by conducting an official ground breaking for the education center. The theme of the new center will incorporate the design of the duck hunting club house at the Little Cedar Point unit of the refuge. Fishery Biologist Wells assisted with the preparation for and participated in festivities for the Alpena FRO. A refuge centennial display was designed and constructed by Biologist Wells. The newly constructed display will be used throughout the year at Ottawa NWR to celebrate the centennial. It depicts the history of the refuge system and the resources it protects. Biologist Wells also assisted the refuge staff by providing input for the ground breaking event and visitors services on the day of the event. Approximately 60 people attended the event including local television news channels and local newspapers.

Susan E. Wells

Career Pathway Night

Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill participated in the Career Pathway Night sponsored by Alpena Community College and AMA Educational Service District. The purpose for the event was to introduce high school and early college students to careers that are available. Dr. Hill delivered a PowerPoint presentation to participants describing fishery career opportunities with the Fish and Wildlife Service. A variety of other careers were presented during the evening including conservation officer, environmental consultant, forester, geologist, and meteorologist just to name a few. The event was attended by approximately 65-70 students and parents from the surrounding area.

Tracy D. Hill

Lake Trout Were a Hit at the Traverse City Hunting and Fishing Expo



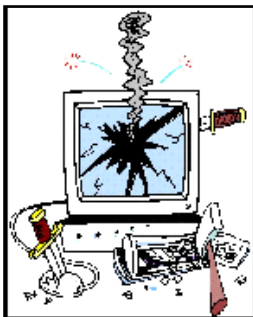
Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Traverse City, Michigan on 21 and 22 March 2003 to staff the Service's display booth at the Traverse City Hunting and Fishing Expo, an annual event held at Howe Arena. A coldwater aquarium complete with limestone substrate was used to display lake trout living in a natural setting. Specimens of exotic and native organisms from the Great Lakes were also available for visitors to handle. Approximately 400 visitors ranging in age from young children to senior citizens visited the booth

during those two days. Boase answered questions from the general public and from other professionals attending the event. Most questions pertained to fisheries research and the health of the Great Lakes. The forum was an excellent opportunity for Boase to explain how the Alpena FRO is working with other Service program staff, natural resource agency biologists, recreational anglers, and commercial fishers from both Canada and the US in efforts to improve the health of the Great Lakes. The event provided Boase an opportunity to interact with the public and other members of the Service from this region.

James Boase

Leadership in Science and Technology

'Out of Date' Computers Disposal

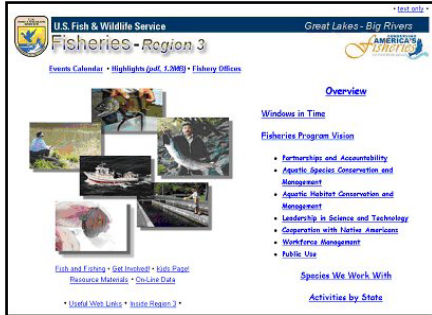


Administrative technician Debra Turner began the process of disposing of old computers and miscellaneous computer supplies in the basement. The computers are unusable and are taking up storage space. They were tested and most were found to be cannibalized for parts in maintaining other computers. The paperwork for proper disposal of these items was filled out and forwarded to the region for the next step in the process.

Debra Turner

There's A New Fisheries Web Site in the Great Lakes and Big Rivers Region

A new look and more information were added to the Fisheries Division web page in Region 3. The site has information on fishery programs, responsibilities, and activities in the Great Lakes and Big Rivers Region. The site is structured in alignment with the



Fisheries Program Vision that was implemented in early 2003. Some interesting features on the site include "Highlights" of recent fishery activities, information on the native, threatened and endangered, and aquatic nuisance "Species We Work With", and downloadable fishery fact sheets and brochures on the "Resource Material" link. Anjanette Bowen of the Alpena Fishery Resources Office designed the site with assistance from Region 3 regional and field

fishery offices. Check it out at <http://midwest.fws.gov/fisheries>.

Anjanette Bowen

Workforce Management

Career Day at Fairview High School

Alpena FRO Fish and Wildlife Biologist Heather Enterline participated in Fairview High School's bi-annual Career Day on March 12. Enterline spoke to approximately 30 students interested in natural resource professions about careers available through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Students seemed very interested, and asked a number of good questions about fishery biology and law enforcement. Several students expressed an interest in the STEP and SCEP programs.

Heather Enterline